



62ND CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

Building Bridges for Success

SHERATON FOUR SEASONS | KOURY CONVENTION CENTER | GREENSBORO, NC

It's **ALL**
about
Communication!



exceptional children's assistance center

2012

Empowering Families ★ Improving Lives



ecac's major programs

NC PTI:

Parent Training and Information Center funded through IDEA '04

NC HIC:

Family to Family Health Information Center

NC SIP:

NC State Improvement Project with the NC DOE

RPTAC:

Region 2 Technical Assistance Center

ecac is a private non-profit parent organization committed to improving the lives and education of ALL children through a **special emphasis on children with disabilities...**

Providing information, education, outreach and support to and for families across the state of NC.

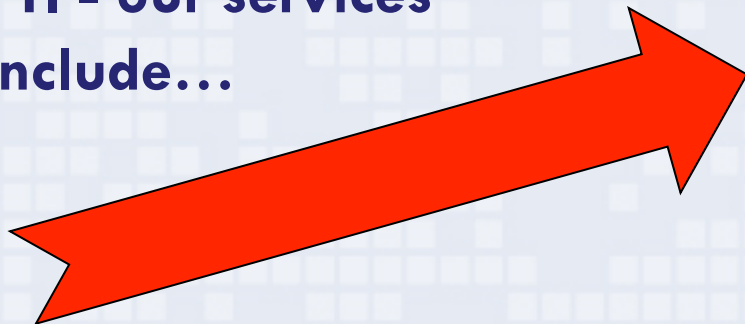


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**Home to North
Carolina's Parent
Training &
Information Center -
PTI - our services
include...**



ecac

exceptional children's
assistance center

North Carolina's Parent Training & Information Center (PTI)

...committed to improving the lives and education of ALL children!

ECAC offers Parents of Children with Special Needs...

1. Individual assistance with educational concerns.
2. Parent education workshops on a variety of topics:
 - a. Parents' Rights and Education Laws (IDEA '04, NCLB, etc.)
 - b. Writing Effective IEPs (Individualized Education Programs)
 - c. Early Childhood Programs and Services (Birth to 3)
 - d. Transition to Preschool and Kindergarten
 - e. Becoming Your Child's Best Advocate
 - f. Positive Behavior Supports
 - g. Transition to Adulthood
 - h. Effective Communication Skills
 - i. Inclusion: Everybody Belongs!
 - j. Literacy for All!
 - k. Other topics as requested
3. Information Packets and referral services
4. Newsletter
5. Lending Library
6. IEP Partners
7. Parent to Parent Support
8. Information and assistance to parent groups



**All services are provided to NC parents
and families at no charge!**

For More Information, contact ecac:

Main Office: (704) 892-1321

Raleigh Office: (866) 740-4135 – toll-free

Western Office: (866) 545-5299 – toll-free

Eastern Office: (800) 782-2094 – toll-free

Parent Information Line: 1-800-962-6817

(Parents only please on the toll-free number)

907 Barra Row, Suites 102/103 • Davidson, North Carolina 28036 • (704) 892-1321 (Voice/TDD) • Fax: (704) 892-5028

www.ecac-parentcenter.org



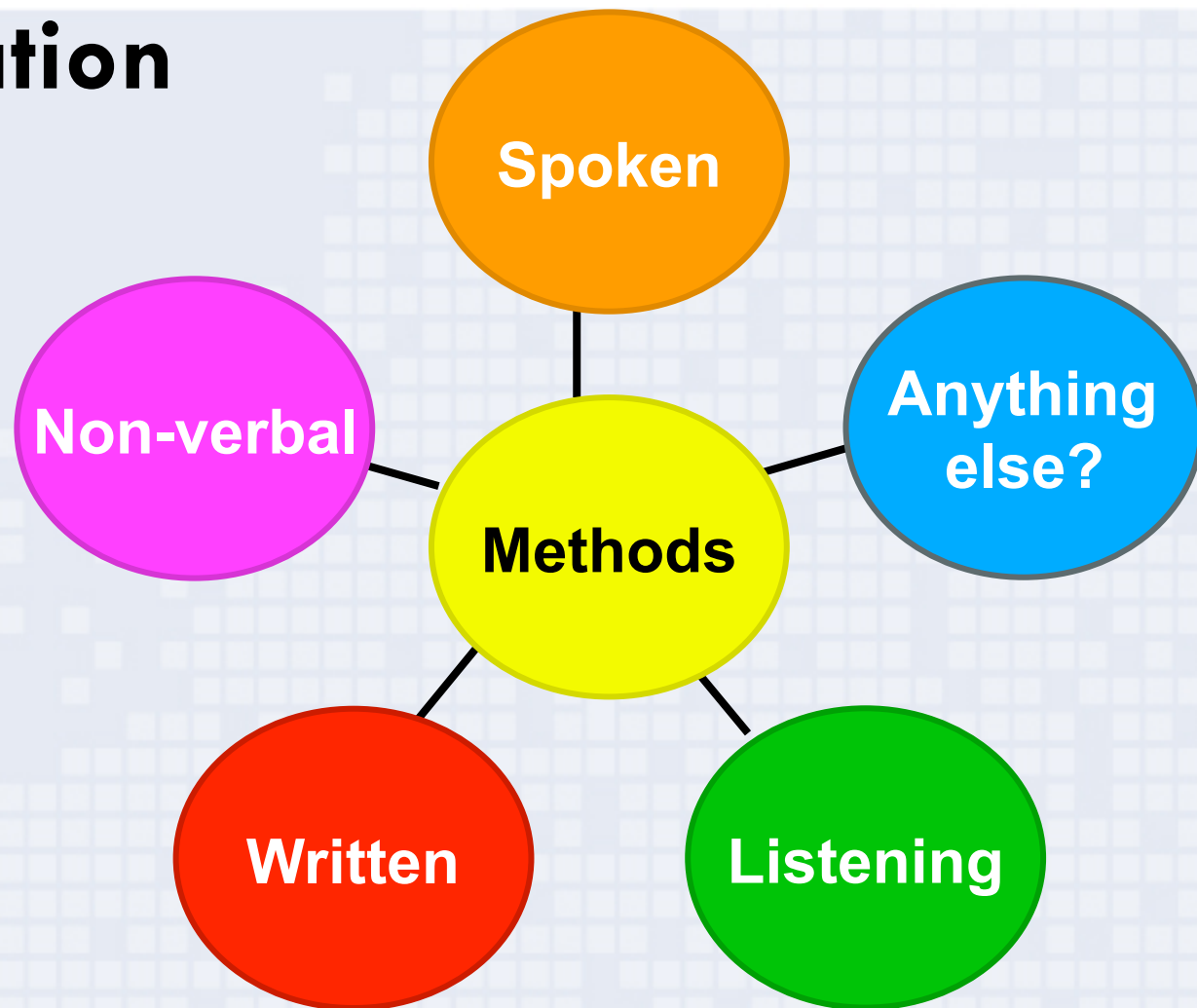
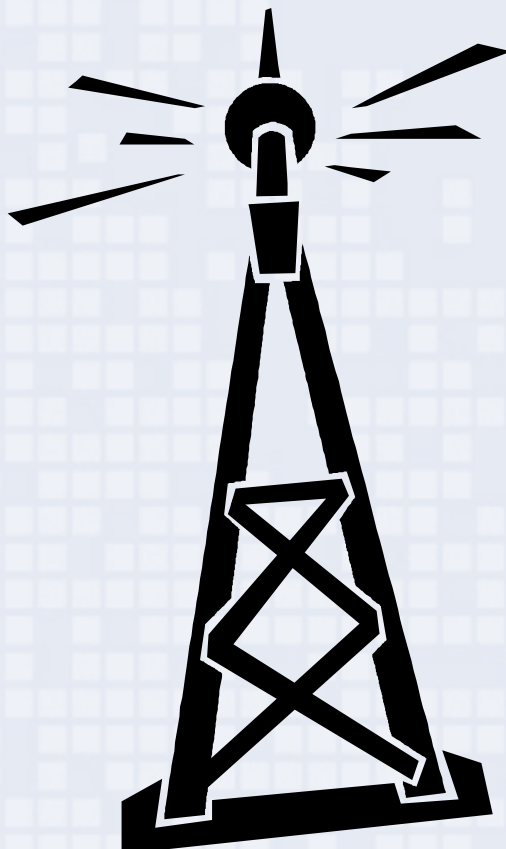
So, what's so special about the NC PTI?

- ▶ All services are provided at **no cost to families** and low or no cost to professionals!
- ▶ **Statewide Parent-Info-Line** answered by staff who are parents of children with disabilities



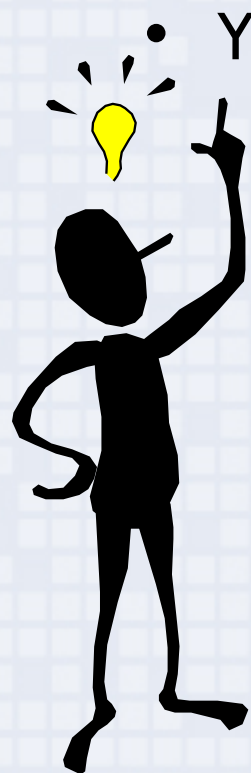


Communication



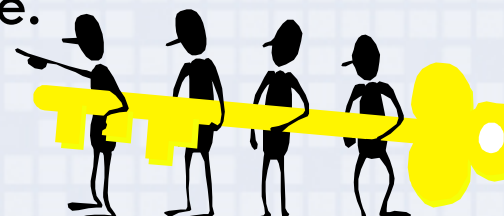


As an equal partner in your child's education . . .



• You must be able to:

- Effectively communicate your views and feelings to the Team and other school personnel:
 - Teachers (regular and special education), administrators, related services professionals, classroom assistants, bus drivers, and anyone else who is working either directly with your child or who is in a decision-making role.





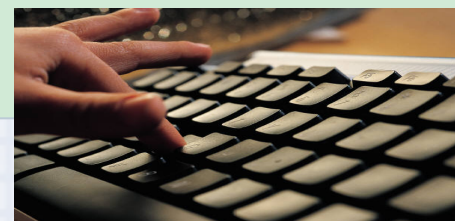
Be ready to communicate effectively

Prioritize and plan ahead!

- Make a list of the issues
- Put them in order of importance
- Know which ones you are willing to let go of if necessary:
 - “What’s important for my child is...”
 - “We really need to focus on...”

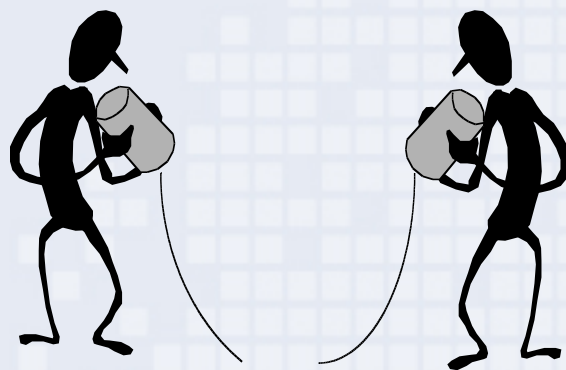
Have options and ideas for solutions in mind, and offer them for discussion!

- “Here’s a recommendation from (an expert) that has proven successful for other students. I would like us to seriously consider this for *Janie*.”
- Let’s try this piece of assistive technology equipment with *Jamaal* for 8 weeks and see how it goes.”





When you have something to say...



Remember the **3** styles or types of communication
(holds true for talking, writing, and body language too!)



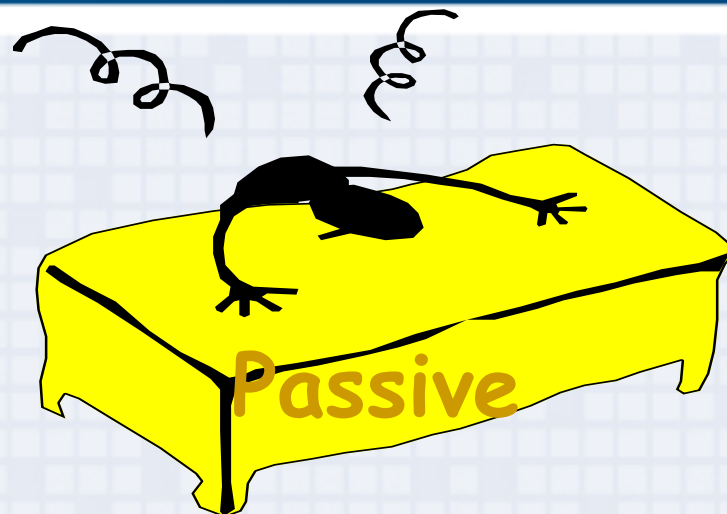
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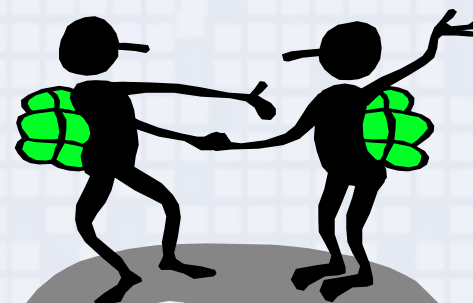
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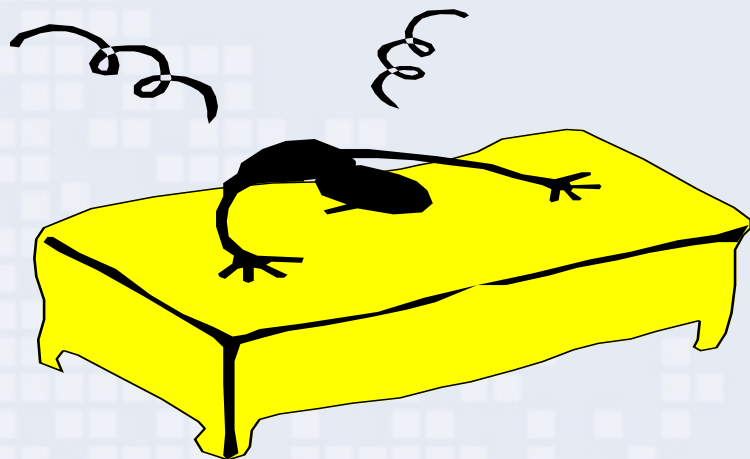
Aggressive



Passive

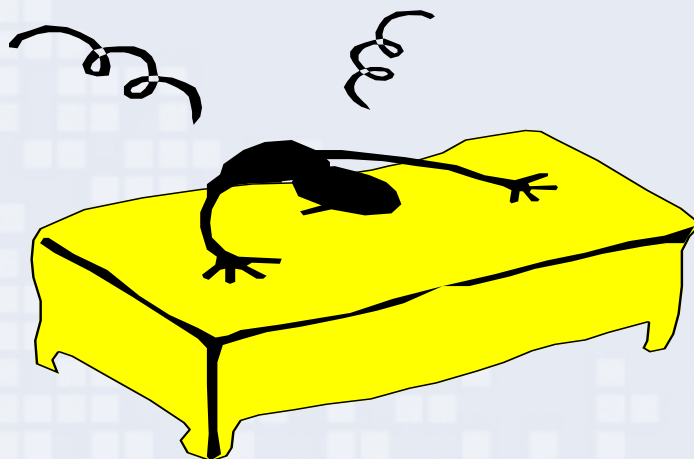


Assertive



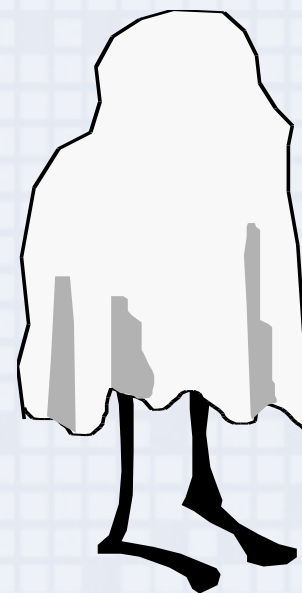
Passive Behavior

Allows other people to treat you, your thoughts and feelings in whatever way they want without your expression



Characteristics of Passive Behavior

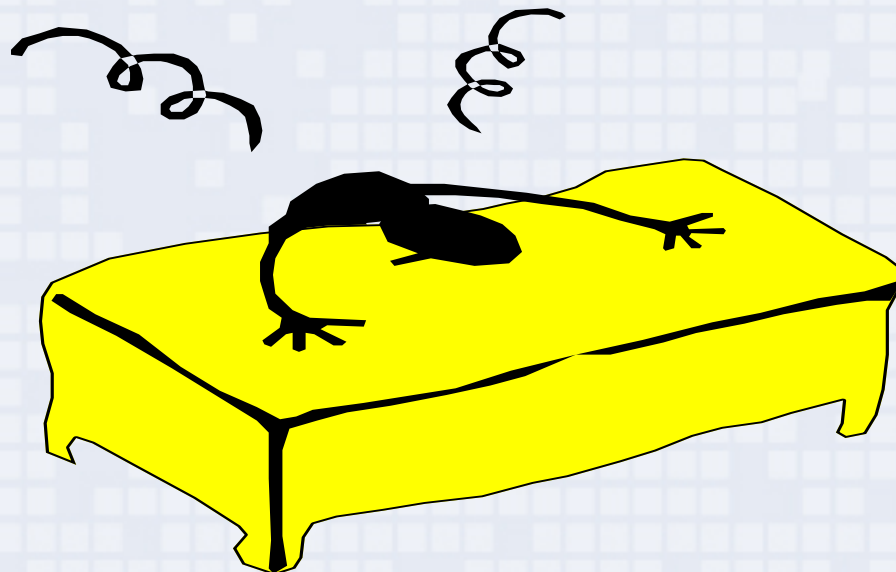
- You avoid All problems
- You establish a pattern of others taking advantage of you
- You become angry and resentful





Results of *Passive Behavior*

**You feel *powerless*.
You waste time.**





Aggressive Behavior

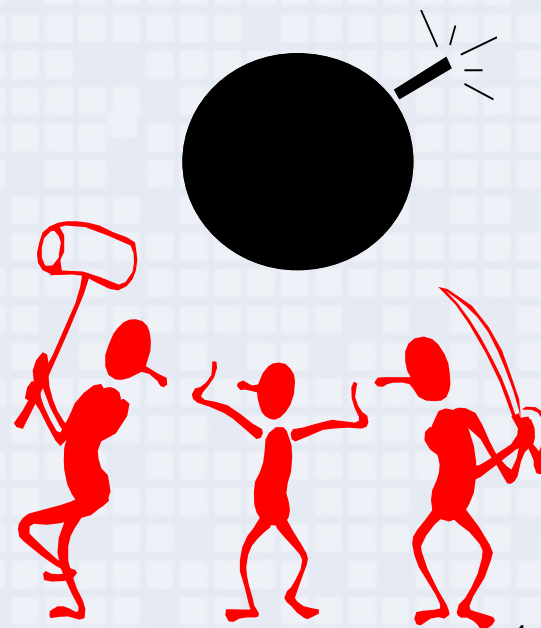
Standing up for what
YOU want, regardless of the rights
and feelings
of others.





Characteristics of *Aggressive* Behavior

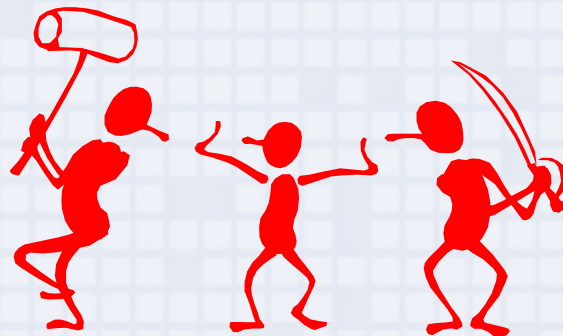
- You attack people — *not* problems.
- You let anger get *out of control*.
- You demand — *not* request.





Results of *Aggressive Behavior*

- Gives you *temporary* satisfaction.
- Offends others.
- Others fear you and want to avoid you.





Assertive Behavior

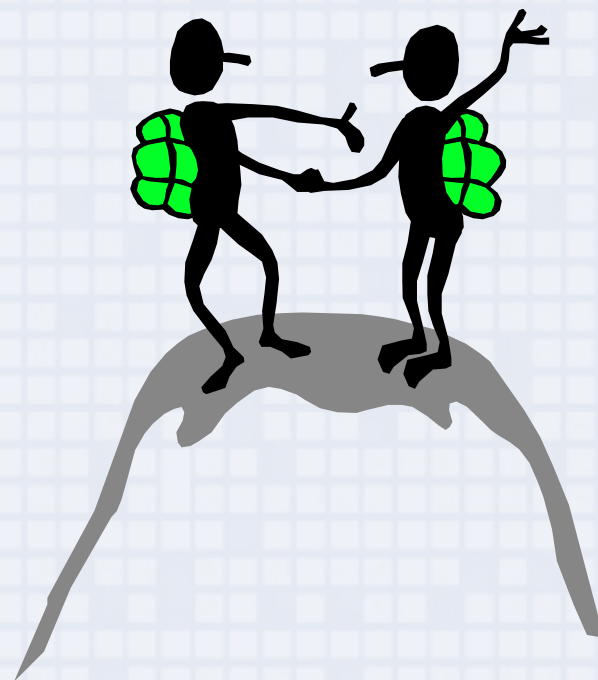


Standing up for
personal rights and
expressing thoughts,
feelings and beliefs
in direct, honest and
appropriate ways
which respect the rights
of other people.



Characteristics of Assertive Behavior

- ✓ Focus is on problems.
- ✓ Establishes good working relationships.
- ✓ Deals appropriately with anger.
- ✓ You express feelings





Results of *Assertive Behavior*

People will respect you.

Problems have a good chance of
being resolved.

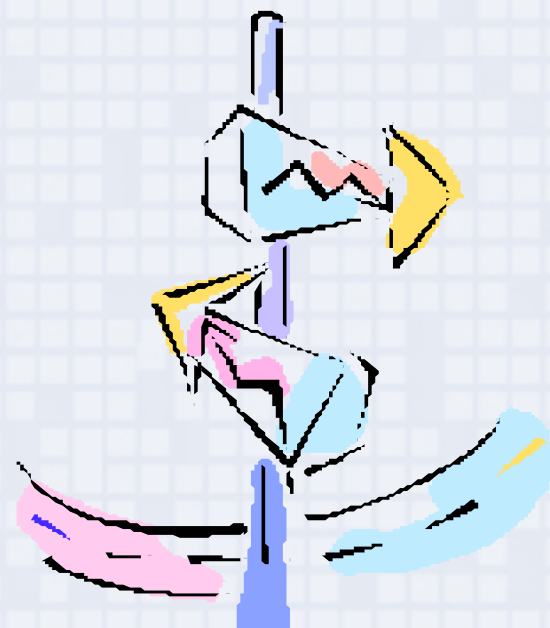
You feel good about yourself.





Communication is a 2-way street

...with multiple lanes, crazy drivers, and lots of traffic circles!



Pay attention and check for direction!



Communicate to understand



- *Paraphrase*

“...in other words...”

- *Summarize*

“...let’s make sure I understand..”

- *Outline*

“...my position is...”



Ways to check for meaning.....

Actively listen to understand!

- If you don't understand, ask for more information.
- Try saying:

Resist the temptation to answer your own question or put words in someone else's mouth!

“ I just don't understand what you are saying. Can you explain it in a different way or give me some examples?”



LISTENING is important too!

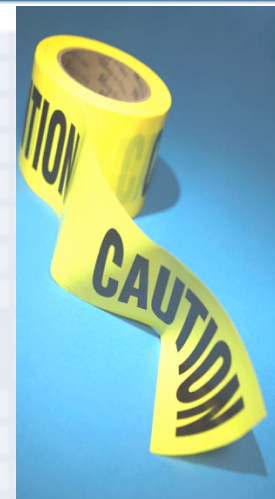
Expressing our wants,
feelings, thoughts and
opinions clearly and
effectively is only part
of the communication
process needed.





6 Barriers to Listening

- The opinions are different from yours.
- You have had the conversation before
- You don't like the person
- The person is saying something you don't want to hear
- You feel anxious or the comments cause stress
- The person is making a request of you, your time or your resources, that sounds like a demand





10 Steps to Effective Listening

1. Stop Talking!
2. Put the other person at ease
 - Give them space and time to speak.
 - Remember to watch your body language.
3. Show them you want to hear them.
 - Look at them. Listen to UNDERSTAND!
4. Remove distractions.
 - Give the speaker your full attention.





10 Steps to Effective Listening

5. Empathize with the person.

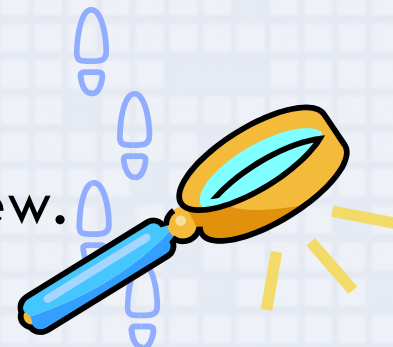
- Look at the situation from their point of view.

6. Be patient.

- Some people take longer to find the right words.
- Give the speaker time before replying.

7. Watch your own emotions.

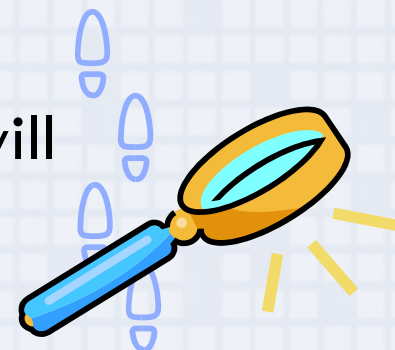
- When angry, frightened or upset, we miss critical parts of what is being said to us.
- Be extra careful to listen to the intent and meaning of their words.





10 Steps to Effective Listening

8. Be slow to disagree, criticize or argue.
 - Even when you disagree, let them have their point of view
9. Ask lots of questions.
 - Ask the speaker to clarify, say more, give an example or explain further.
 - They will speak more precisely and you will hear and understand more accurately



10. STOP TALKING!

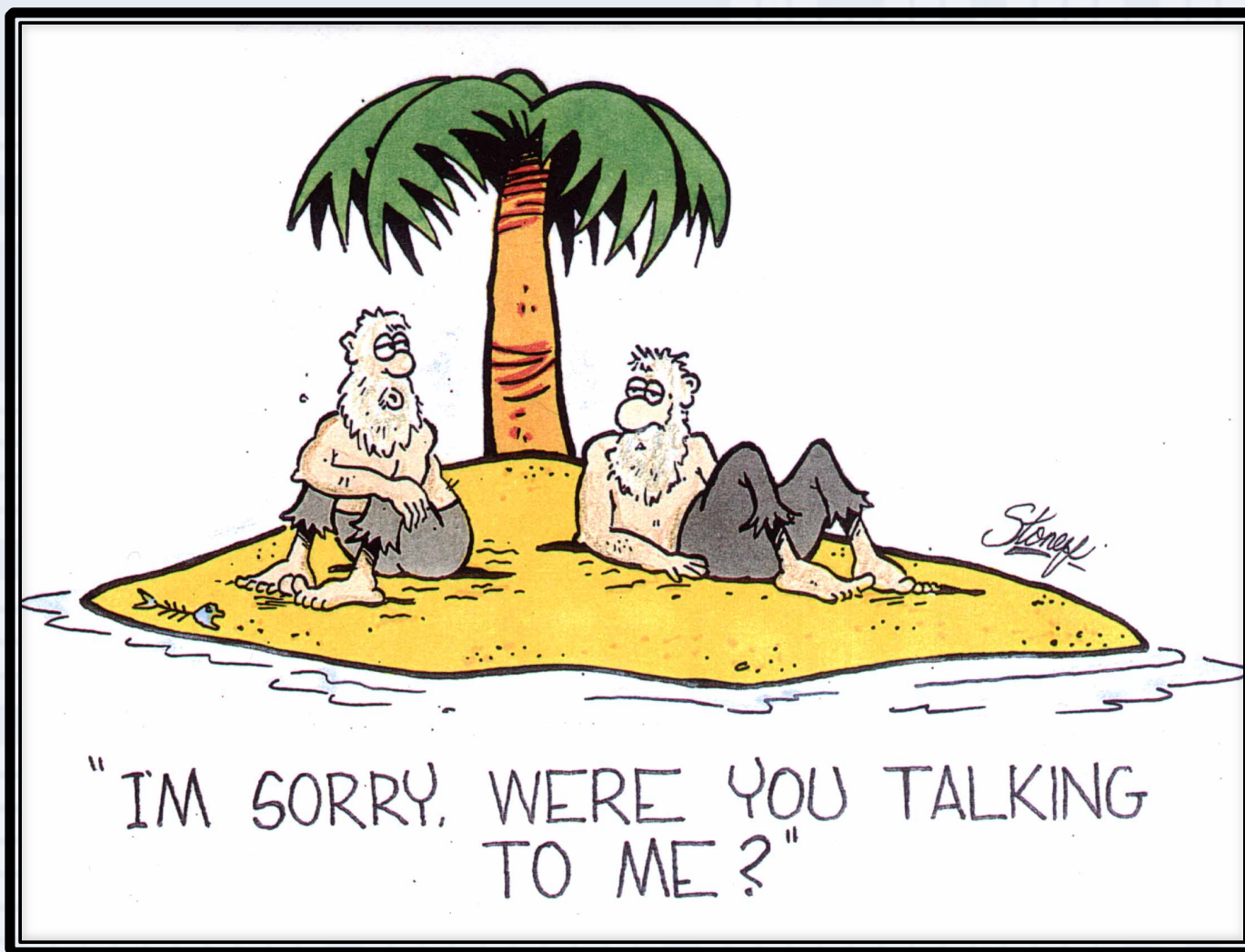
- The first and last point are the same because all other steps depend on it.



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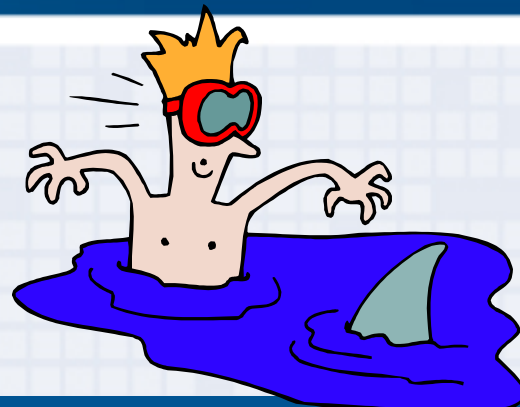
Reality Check!



- Some people are just more difficult to work with than others.
- Take the high road - and respectfully, but effectively work around them!



**Remember, there is
nothing personal !**



**There are NO personal issues...the ONLY
issue is the quality of your child's program!**

**Effective advocates do not attack people,
they address the problem.**



Your mouth's closed but you are still communicating! What's going on?

What messages are you sending with your body language?

- Interested?
- Bored?
- Angry?
- Distrustful?



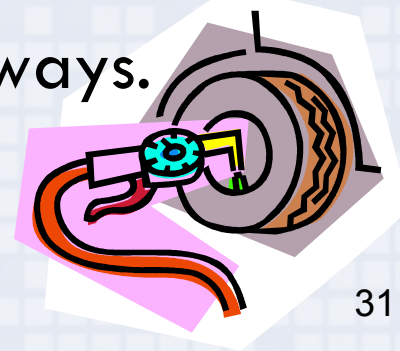
“ It's hard to shake hands with your arms crossed!”



Watch your emotional pressure gauge

Say what you really want to say, but avoid whining, pleading, screaming and sarcasm!

- Focus positively on your goals
- Keep negative thoughts of past or present issues from creeping into your mind.
- Be positive about succeeding.
- Be assertive - speak up for what you believe in
 - -in direct, honest and appropriate ways.

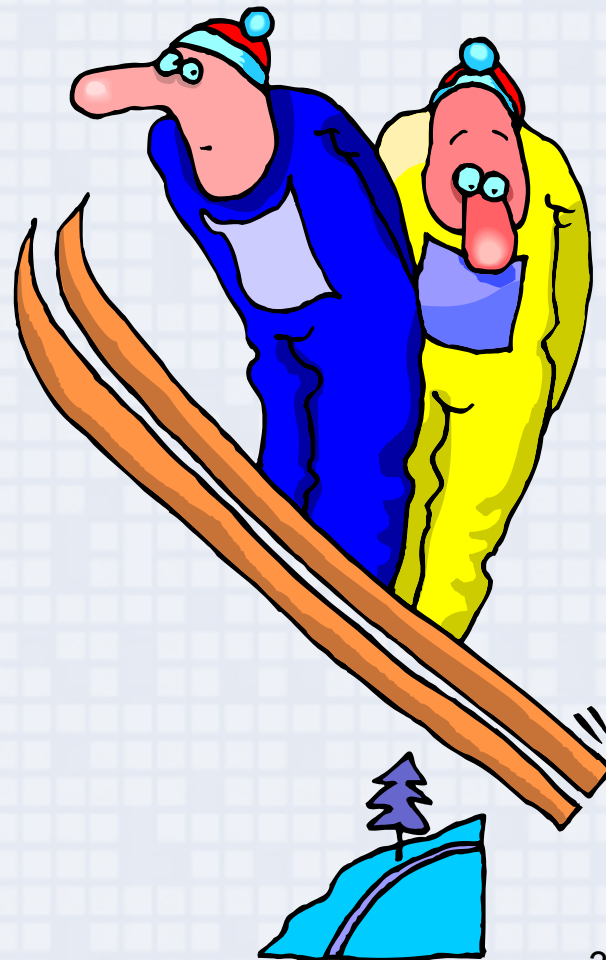




Look before you leap!

Get your facts straight before you take an action!

- What else do you need to know?
- How do you find that information?





- Maintain on-going communication with the school
- Monitor your child's progress and behavior
- Ask questions
- Give people the benefit of the doubt – don't assume bad intentions
- Always try to solve problems at the lowest level

General Advocacy Tips for Parents





Reality Check!



- Some people are just more difficult to work with than others.
- Take the high road - and respectfully but effectively work around them!



Conflict may happen along the way ...

- When there is confusion or a misunderstanding of the roles and responsibilities;
- When effective communication is lacking or breaks down; or
- When there is a genuine fundamental disagreement about services and programs.





Take one step at a time



- Contact appropriate person(s) about the concerns
 - Teacher
 - Related service personnel
 - Transportation officials
 - IEP Team
 - Principal
 - Special Education Program Director
- Be sure concerns or issues are well documented in writing

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Chain of Command is Important

- Go to the source
 - If the problem is in the classroom, talk to the classroom teacher before going over his/her head
- If unable to resolve, go to that person's supervisor and so on..
 - Principal, EC Director, Superintendent, etc.
- Ask if the LEA has a formal policy for resolving disagreements





If you get stuck, ask....

- Is there enough data to make a good decision?
- What other data or information is needed?
 - Has all available information been shared with the Team **in writing** ? (Diagnosis, educational impacts, changes, reports, etc.)
- Who else should be included in this discussion?
 - Consultants, last year's teacher(s), service providers, central office personnel, etc.

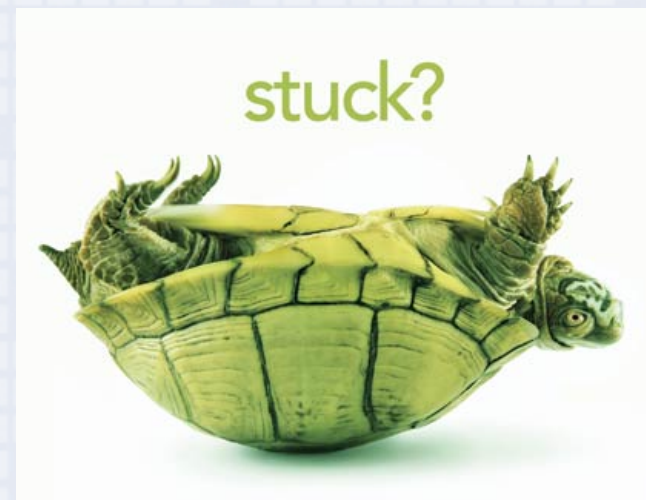
stuck?





If you get stuck.....

- Ask for a trial period if you would like to try something new that the other IEP Team members are not willing to commit to at this time.
- Try to identify the reasons for the “refusal” or resistance
 - Can the Team address that barrier?
- Make sure discussion is accurately and thoroughly documented in writing
- Remember you can always have another meeting



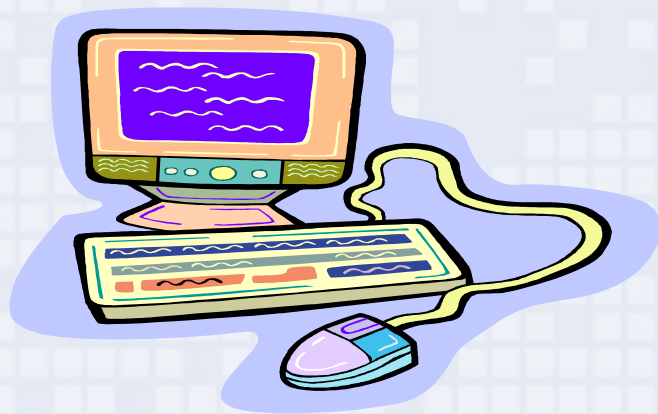


Make ALL requests in writing

- Short and simple
- Email works too!

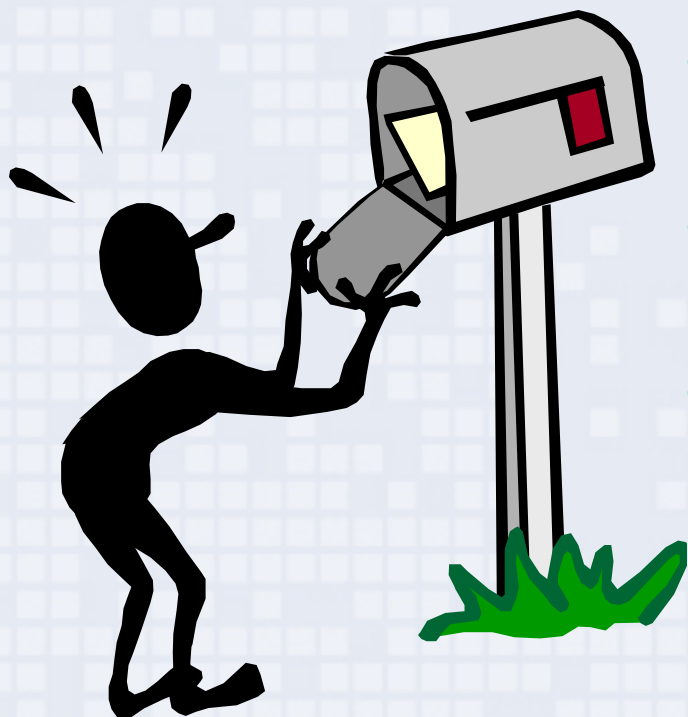


**Always keep a
copy for your
records!**





Follow-up conversations or meetings with a note or a letter - *even if it happened in the hallway or on the phone!*



- Thank the teacher or others for their time
- Restate what was discussed and decided, or what you are asking for
- When asking for something, include a time frame for a response back to you and also the best way to reach you.
- **Don't forget to date the letter and keep a copy for your records!**



Keep Records!!!!!!!

Your records of past requests, any data, IEPs, progress notes or report cards, etc. will help you to:

- Stay organized;
- Document progress or needs;
- Support future requests; and
- Effectively advocate for your child!

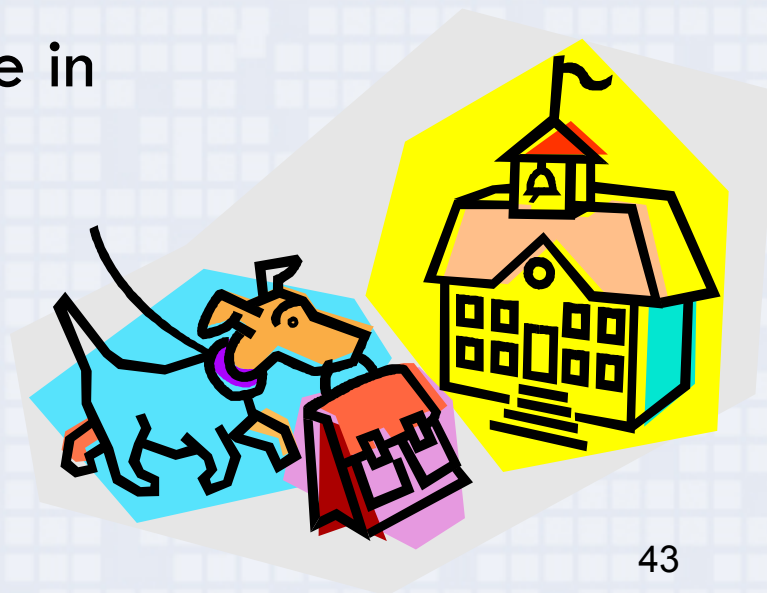


Your requests have a better chance of achieving the desired results when you have the documentation to back you up!



Participate!

- Be active and visible in your child's school
 - Volunteer!
 - Have lunch with your child
- Attend and actively participate in
 - Parent / teacher conferences
 - PTA meetings
 - Family nights





Build relationships for the future!

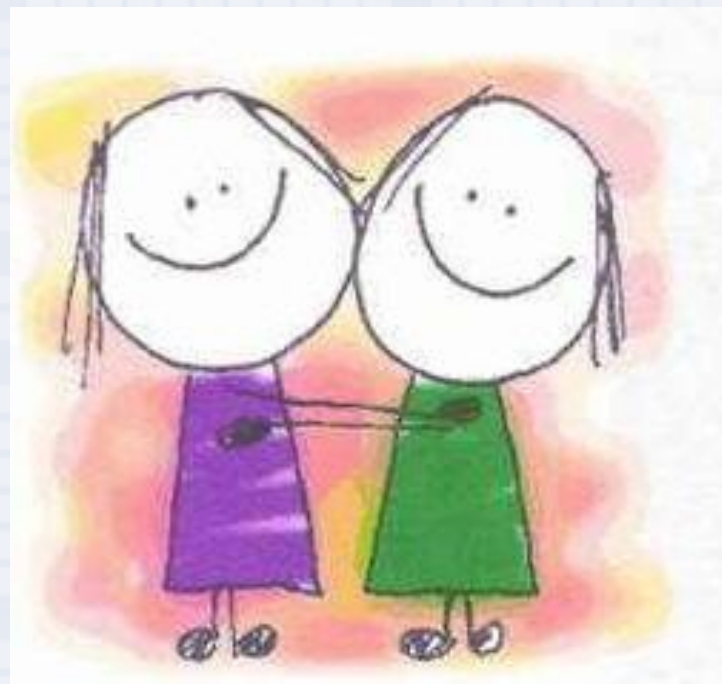
Remember you are only human!

- If you make a mistake or cause offense, say you are sorry!
- Acknowledge what has gone well.
- Always remember to thank people for their efforts, concerns and time.



Know and Use Your Resources!

- Use “trusted” websites –
NC DPI, ECAC, LD Online,
etc.
- Identify your local
resources.
- Know where and how to
look up Laws / Policies.
 - Federal, NC Public
School Law, NC Policies,
Local School Board
policies
- And.....

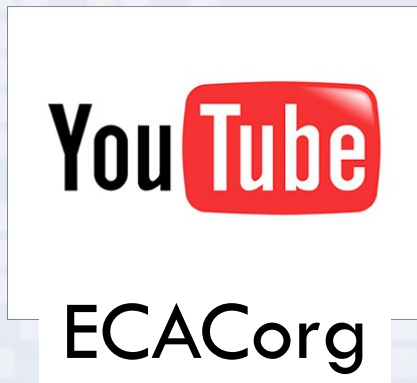


ECAC Parent Educators



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Our blog



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Raleigh, Asheville & Wilmington



Sources

- **Communication Skills from:**
 - **Parent's Together**, a joint publication by the **Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (ECAC)**, Davidson, NC and the former **Governor's Advocacy Council**, Raleigh, NC
- **CADRE: Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education**
- **Find Tools** www.mindtools.com
- **From Emotions to Advocacy, Second Edition**
www.wrightslaw.com